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Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 DODE-00 EB-08 NSAE-00 ICA-11
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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1904
INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ESTC, SF
SUBJECT: PRE-LICENSE CHECKS: BONAVION AND TRONAIR

REF: (A) STATE 126441, (B) STATE 169951

1. FOLLOWING INFORMATION ELICITED CONCERNING PURCHASERS OF EQUIPMENT FOR TESTING DIGITAL CIRCUITS.

2. TRONAIR: ESTABLISHED 1969, HAS FOUR EMPLOYEES OF WHOM 2 ARE SALESMEN. MANAGING DIRECTOR, H. HEAD (WHO ANSWERED PHONE) CONFIRMED ORDER PLACED WITH AFRONIX. SAID NORMAL BUSINESS WAS SALES AND SERVICE OF AIRCRAFT AVIONICS BUT OWING TO SLACKNESS OF MARKET, HE WAS MOVING INTO TESTING OF COMPUTER DIGITAL CARDS. CONGEN JOHANNESBURG REPORTS TRADE AND BANK REFERENCES ARE FAVORABLE.

3. BONAVION: FIRM IS NOT LISTED IN PHONE BOOK AND WHOLLY UNKNOWN TO CONTACTS OF CONGEN JOHANNESBURG. GREENWOOD OF AFRONIX GAVE US PHONE OF MAN NAMED ROSSOUW WHO TURNED OUT TO BE A PURCHASING OFFICIAL OF ATLAS AIRCRAFT. ATLAS IS A SA GOVERNMENT CORPORATION PRIMARILY ENGAGED IN MANU-FACTURE OF IMPALA, MIRAGE AND KOEDOE AIRCRAFT.
IMPALA IS PRODUCED IN TRAINER AND ATTACK VERSIONS.
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KOEDOE IS OBSERVATION PLANE SIMILAR TO ARMY BEAVER.

4. ROSSOUW SAID ATLAS WAS JUST ABOUT TO LAUNCH BONAVION AS A COMMERCIAL SUBSIDIARY TO DO TESTING AND SERVICE OTHER TEST SYSTEM USERS OF DIGITAL CIRCUITS. WE POINTED OUT PROBLEM OF LICENSING SUCH EQUIPMENT FOR FIRM KNOWN TO BE ENGAGED PRIMARILY IN MILITARY MANUFACTURE. HE

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CLAIMED THIS WAS PART OF ATLAS DIVERSIFICATION PROGRAM AND SAID HE WOULD ASK GENERAL MANAGER OF ATLAS, G.W. WARD, TO CALL WITH FURTHER PARTICULARS. WARD HAS NOT YET DONE SO.

5. GREENWOOD SAYS HE IS ALSO BEING PRESSED BY A CUSTOMER, FULMEN TELECOMMUNICATIONS OF ISANDO, TRANSVAAL, REGARDING A BENCH-TYPE IC TESTER TERRADYNE J 113D WHICH WAS ORDERED IN JANUARY.

6. COMMENT: WE ARE UNABLE TO JUDGE WHETHER IT IS REASONABLE FOR SUCH A SMALL OPERATION AS TRONAIR'S TO INVEST IN AN EXPENSIVE DIAGNOSTIC TEST SYSTEM WHEN IT HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN THIS KIND OF WORK. IF EXPLANATION SEEMS PLAUSIBLE TO COMMERCE, WE COULD INSPECT FACILITIES AND MAKE FURTHER INQUIRIES. REQUEST COMMERCE ADVICE ON QUESTIONS TO RAISE AND WHAT TO BE ON LOOKOUT FOR AT SITE.

7. RE BONAVION, THIS PRESENTS AN EVEN MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM BECAUSE ATLAS IS THE SOURCE OF ALL SA MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND ITS OPERATIONS ARE SHROUDED IN SECRECY. ASSUMING FULL COOPERATION FROM FIRM IN ESTABLISHING THAT BONAVION IS A LEGITIMATE CIVIL SUBSIDIARY AND EQUIPMENT IN QUESTION HAS NO RELATION TO PRODUCTION OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT, WOULD IT BE WORTHWHILE FOR US TO CARRY MATTER
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ANY FURTHER? IF SO, WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE GUIDANCE ON LINES OF INQUIRY, AS REQUESTED IN PARA 6 FOR TRONAIR.

8. REQUEST ALSO ANY ADVICE WE CAN PASS GREENWOOD ON IC TESTER DESCRIBED PARA 5.
EDMONDSON

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